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## MY FAT FRIEND.

ANY one who at a certain fixed hour of the day is in the habit of walking down a prescribed line of streets, must soon become aware that he is constantly meeting many persons who are, apparently like himself, obedient to the routine calls of duty, and to be found always at the same hour in the same place. He will, in his own mind, resort to a custom of primitive countries, and find names for these individuals founded upon any trivial peculiarity of person or apparel that his eye may have chanced to light upon, by which he will subsequently be able to recognise and identify them to his own comfort and satisfaction. Thus, he will know perfectly well whom he intends to refer to by the words, rather thought than uttered, 'the red-nosed man,' or 'the man with the wall-eye,' or 'the woman with the blue umbrella,' or 'the young lady with the mole on her cheek,' and so on. Just as in the nomenclature of the savage, 'the Flying Cloud,' 'the Bounding Buffalo,' or 'the Downy Bird,' convey distinct ideas of persons and characters. Occasionally, it may happen that after-circumstances draw him nearer to these people he is always meeting. 'The man with the wall-eye' may ultimately prove to be his long-lost brother, whom he has been for many years in search of, with, of course, the necessary trademark of a strawberry-stain on his left arm, with which it seems that long-lost brothers, especially in novels, are always stamped when quite young, just as linen is initialed before it is intrusted to the laundress, in order that they may be acknowledged by their families at a later period in their history. 'The woman with the blue umbrella' may be found, on inquiry, to be the second-cousin of your good old friend Jones's wife's step-sister, the knowledge of which fact, although it may not result in connecting her very intimately with you, is yet decidedly interesting and noteworthy. How bitter a foe time may reveal in 'the red-nosed man!' how tender may be the tie destined to exist between you and 'the young lady with the mole on her cheek!' But these are probably exceptional cases; as a rule, you will know no more of these people than you knew in the first instance. Years will pass, and still the same travellers will be treading the same pathway, and may be seen there at the same old hour. You will have abbreviated their surnames: these will now be 'red-nose,' 'wall-eye,' 'blue umbrella,' and 'mole,' or, perhaps, the tenderer and more playful 'moley'—that will be all. There will be no closer intimacy, no more knowledge really than subsisted formerly. And do they know *you*? and have they each a name for you? and have any of them hit upon the same name? for they are all unknown to

each other—there can be no conferring or collusion between; and have you really any distinct peculiarities which these people can seize upon readily, and each in turn designate and recognise you by? And would not you like to know the titles they have given you?

Of course, these observations can only have reference to life in cities or populous places. In the country, we meet no one, or, at anyrate, no one that we don't know everything about. The road stretches out before us like white tape winding about upon a green table-cloth. We can see if any one approaches a thousand yards or more off, and know for certain that if that drab speck in the extreme distance be not Farmer Giles's blackbird-boy, why, then, it stands to reason that it must be Farmer Miles's blackbird-boy, for there is barely a possibility of its being any other living creature. Who else could it be out on the public highway at such a time, when everybody is at work in the fields behind the ricks? It must be understood, too, that there is no power of selection in the matter. The people one meets are people thrust upon one; there is no picking and choosing. We meet because we can't help it. Indeed, the very persons of all others we should especially prefer to meet, seem to be precisely those who are the most kept out of our way. What, for instance, has become of that pleasant, bald-headed, old gentleman, who wore a frill to his shirt, and emerald studs, and a crimson watch-ribbon—who travelled with me all the way to Paris only last spring—who discussed so pleasantly various profound questions in political economy—who so exactly chimed in with my opinions on many subjects of interest—who, I am sure, is very anxious to know my name and address, if only with the view of making use of the same on the next occasion of his remodelling his will—who swore with me an eternal friendship—yet suddenly disappeared at the station, and whom I have never set eyes on since? Where may now be that delightful young lady with the violet eyes, and the crinkly hair, richly gilt, who, in the summer, was my fellow-traveller upon a railway in North Devon—who was working a pair of cuffs in crochet, the while she spoke so interestingly upon the subjects of pre-Raphaelite poetry, an aquarium that she possessed at home, and generally upon the marvels of the sea-shore, to be enjoyed to the uttermost at low tide? We have never met again. Has *she* sorrowed over that sad fact as I have? There are people continually meeting who seem expressly made to suit each other; who are admirably adapted to become friends, intimates, lovers, husbands, and wives; whose tastes, caprices, and opinions seem to dove-tail together immediately, to fit to each other like portions of

marquetry or mosaic work. Yet there comes the end of the evening, when the young lady's carriage 'stops the way,' or the clock strikes twelve, and Cinderella runs from the ball-room, to be seen no more; or the bell rings, and the train starts; or the porter cries out the name of some unknown station, and she secures her bonnet-box, and trips away for ever. And the other kindred soul, with a sort of orphaned, widowed feeling depressing it, goes on its solitary journey sorrowful enough. What admirable first chapters of romances (never, alas! to be carried any further) exist in those interviews with people one has met but once.

The man of whom I am about to speak I met often, very often—not simply in a prescribed pathway at a particular hour, but in all places and at all times. I noted him at first the more especially that he seemed to present himself as an incarnate contradiction of an axiom which I had accepted early in life. I had long held that fat and sadness could not co-exist, that there was a certain incompatibility of temper that would always keep the two permanently divorced; but here I found a decidedly fat man with a no less decided sorrowful expression. How could this be? What was meant by this strange union in the person of this man I was always meeting? He was a large man altogether, tall as well as broad, and muscularly made. He was of a ruddy complexion; his face indeed was very red; and like other men with red faces whom I have had occasion to notice, he was prone to wear a white hat, as though with the intention of giving the rich colour of his skin every chance of glowing out in the strongest effect, and with the most prominent force. Thoroughly possessed with this idea, he has even been known to wear a white handkerchief round his neck, or even a white scarf, retained in its original foldings by a massive horse-shoe-headed pin. There was this difficulty about my fat friend's neck—it was not possible to define exactly where it began and where it ended. It had entered into some extraordinary partnership arrangement of a close and binding nature with his shoulders, and his chin, and his cheeks, by which they were all in some way merged in each other, and thoroughly welded and blended together. One consequence of this appeared in the large amount of shaving that he had to undergo, for he wore no hair upon his face, except so far as his eyebrows and eyelashes were concerned. It certainly afforded room enough for the indulgence of any fancy that might have seemed good to him in regard to form and growth of whiskers. He could have raised them in any of those curious shapes in which suburban residents love to cut flower-beds on their garden-laws. He might have enjoyed ornaments of this kind, of either the triangle or the pork-chop, the crescent, the floating bird's-nest pattern, or even that unbecoming form known vulgarly as the 'Newgate frill.' But he disdained such poor whims and humours; he passed his razor unhesitatingly over a very large superficial area. He would seem to have been even possessed by a passion for shaving. Certainly he cut away large portions of his hair on either side of his forehead, and I am by no means sure that he did not shave behind his ears and at the back of his neck. The hair that remained to him seemed to be there only under sufferance, and rather against than with his sanction. It was cut as short, too, as scissors could cut it, but grew thickly and coarsely in consequence, and looked altogether rather like a tight-fitting black skull-cap, than an ordinary head of hair.

Why did he wear that ceaseless air of melancholy? Why was his brow so pucker'd and corrugated with frowns? What weight sat so heavily upon his eyelids? threatening wholly to close them, and rob the world of the restless orbs beneath them, that gave one the idea of blots of shining black sealing-wax dropped upon pink blotting-paper, for the whites

(a courtesy title in this case) were unquestionably bloodshot. Why was he thus 'o'ercast with gloomy cares and discontent,' like Syphax in the play? What had he done in the past? What sorrow was he anticipating in the future?

He was a fat man and a sad; yes, and a respectable-looking. He was always in black, with a crape-band encircling his broad-brimmed white hat. He wore a dress-coat always: he had evidently a contempt for the boiball and school-boy jacket class of attire, now so alarmingly prevalent. His waistcoat was of glossy black satin. He was one of those figures which shew off rich waistcoats to great advantage, bringing them well under notice, and presenting a large surface of the material to public view. A watch-chain formed a handsome festoon on the face of his waistcoat. His boots were resplendently polished; they were quite works of art of their kind. If he blacked them himself, and it is not altogether improbable—for I believe that many more people black their own boots than are supposed to do so—he evidently bestowed both mind, and time, and toil upon them. I can conceive such a polish proceeding from the labours of no hireling that I have ever known; and yet, in spite of this appearance, imposing and meritorious, if it might not be absolutely winning, this man was not happy.

I met him everywhere; he was always the same stout man, with the same sorrowful expression; he varied neither in size nor in look. He knew me too; I could see a sort of feeble sparkle in his eyes as we passed—a mental unexpressed recognition of me. 'This man again!' he must have said to himself, just as I said to myself the same words precisely. Only I had given him a surname; inwardly, I called him 'Marrowfat!' By what process of thought I arrived at this word, what I understood by it, what particular meaning it possessed from my point of view, and how I applied that meaning to the fat man I was meeting so constantly, I cannot now in any way explain. 'Marrowfat again!' I exclaimed within myself as I passed him, and then I marvelled what name he within himself had applied to me; and I held a mental inquest upon myself from the crown of my hat to the double soles of my boots, in the attempt to discover some peculiarity that might arrest another man's attention, and with which he might identify me, and out of which he might draw a name that might seem to him applicable to me. But somehow, though I have a respectably keen perception of the foibles of my neighbours, my own, I notice, do what I will, somehow escape me.

But though I could find a name for Marrowfat, I could not find for him a profession, and this rather puzzled and annoyed me. He did not look like a clergyman—no, certainly not like a clergyman, even if you took away his white hat; nor like a doctor, nor like a lawyer—though more like a lawyer than either a clergyman or a doctor; but then the lawyer presents a *genus* of which there may be many and widely differing species. He did not look like a commercial man; I could fancy that he possessed a mind far above trade. I could, with the aid of my imagination, put him into a variety of attitudes, but I could never see him comfortably behind a counter, pressing on it with his knuckles as though he were wafering letters, and with a seductive smile upon his face, inquiring, 'What may be the next article?' I am sure that Marrowfat never filled such an occupation as that. He might be turfy, though his settled melancholy seemed to present a negative to this notion. Could a man so utterly out of condition have any possible connection with the P. R.? Was he the strong man of an acrobat troupe? Ah! he might be that. Am I guessing more nearly right? Do I grow warmer? Was he a heavy tragedian? A tight-rope dancer? I grow cold again. I am off the scent. It was very provoking to meet this man so frequently, and

yet know no more about him ; to call him absurdly Marrowfat, persuaded the while that his real name was something vastly different.

I cannot conveniently set forth all the reasons that took me from London last autumn ; certainly, among the last ounces of pressing considerations were two facts : that the weather was becoming unbearable, and that I was now meeting Marrowfat a great deal too often. I took the train to the north of England. I found myself at a small watering-place on the eastern coast called Middlington. Perhaps it is hardly fair to call it a watering-place at all ; it was rather the first slight sketch of one, the nucleus round which a watering-place was to grow in the future ; a small huddle of fishermen's cottages ; a dwarf pier, capped by a miniature light-house ; a very strong smell of fish, pitch, and tarpaulin ; a hotel ; three lodging-houses ; a dissenting chapel (the parish church was three miles inland) ; a barn-like edifice, with Corinthian capitals, called the Assembly Rooms ; two bathing-machines ; and an omnibus troubled with a bad attack of dry-rot, and used to convey passengers, when there were any, from the railway-station to the hotel. These items duly set down, and I think I have catalogued the whole of Middlington. It will be gathered that it was not a very attractive place. Still, it had its advantages : I should be very quiet ; I should have it all to myself ; I could do what I liked with Middlington : I could bathe in its sea, and walk on its pier, and ride in its omnibus, and I should be absent from Marrowfat for some weeks.

But somehow I was not so happy at Middlington as I had expected I should be. The weather changed, and grew very squally, and cold, and rainy. I could not walk upon the pier without the waves spitefully splashing me with spray. All notion of bathing was abandoned, and the two bathing-machines were drawn close up to the cliffs, to be well out of the way of the incoming-tide. There was certainly a paucity of amusements in Middlington ; visitors were made too much dependent upon their own resources for enjoyments when anything like bad weather rendered nugatory the natural advantages of the place. I returned to my hotel. I would read yesterday's paper over again, perhaps the day before yesterday's also. Would the people of the house think me a very strange person, if I were to try and get better through the day by eating two dinners—one, say at three o'clock, and another at eight ? Should I be thought very eccentric if I were to go to bed until dinner-time ? It was a dull hotel ; it seemed to exist without doing any business, as though it were blessed with a small independence, and was under no absolute necessity to work for its living. There was a moth-eaten waiter with a husky voice, who seemed to pass his life in gaping at a slatternly chambermaid of great antiquity, who wore spectacles and a wig, and was always carrying about a battered candlestick, as though it were glued to her hand, or grew there like one of those morbid developments of extra limbs which nature sometimes indulges in.

"Orrid weather, sir, aint it ?" said the waiter, as I entered ; and I shouldn't wonder if it was to last like this, oh, for ever so ! and he gaped so violently that he brought the tears into his eyes ; but he was evidently the better for it. "There's a gent in the parlour just arrived ;" and he grinned, deliriously, I thought.

"A gent in the parlour ! is there ? Poor wretch ! he'll enjoy himself at Middlington," I thought as I turned the handle of the door.

On the table was a white hat with a black band ; close to that was a large tumbler of the brownest brandy and water I think I ever saw ; on the floor was a black portmanteau ; drinking the brown brandy and water was a fat man with a sad expression—Marrowfat !

We stood for a moment looking at each other.

What extraordinary chance had thus brought us together ? Was I about at last to learn who my fat friend really was ? I felt rather giddy. This unexpected meeting seemed to have got into my head, as though it were in some way invested with alcoholic properties. The fat man took a gulp at the brown brandy and water ; tattooed vigorously on the table, as though he were playing a grand fantasia on a dumb piano ; and then stared fixedly out of the window.

"Marrowfat here ! Who would ever have expected it ?" So I thought to myself.

" — here ! Who would have expected it ?" So he must have thought to himself. Yes, the same red-faced fat man, with the same expression of hopeless melancholy, the same white hat, and scarf with the horse-shoe pin, the same black satin waistcoat, the same brilliantly polished boots. Why had he come to Middlington ? What could he possibly want in Middlington ?

We were both thorough Britons, I am proud to believe ; we were both most anxious not to speak without an introduction from a common friend. We did all we could to preserve silence, and to ignore the presence of each other ; yet was there something so remarkable in the manner of our meeting, that each must have felt his character as an Englishman was gradually slipping from him ; each must have longed to address the other. I could bear it no longer ; without the utterance of a word, I proffered him the newspaper of the day before yesterday. He didn't want it, evidently ; probably he had read it through already ; still he took it, and laid it down beside him. He gulped at his brown brandy and water again, and then gave the tumbler a sort of circular twist in the air. I presumed the action to signify an acknowledgement in some way of my presence ; but his eyes were still staring fixedly out of the window.

"A dull place this," I stammered out at last. I was nearly adding, "Mr Marrowfat."

"You're right, Mr — — . And then he stopped.

"Have you seen the Assembly Rooms ?" he continued. I admitted that I had.

"Awful !" he said. "There's no other word for it ! How I've been deceived in this place ! Why on earth did they want *me* down here ? I can't think."

"It's melancholy enough," I remarked, hardly knowing what I was saying.

"O well, yes," he admitted, "it's melancholy enough." He was in no way disturbed by my thoughtless observation ; in fact, it seemed to me that he liked it rather than not.

"Why, the rooms don't hold above a hundred, I should say," he went on ; "and blue mould on the walls like a ripe Stilton, and marks on the ceiling like a map of London, where the rain has broken through. Such a place ! and yet ever so much too big for the number of people that go there ; ever so much, I darsay. Well, I must go and look about me."

He rose ; he put on his white hat, slapping it violently on the top, to get it well on, as though he wanted to 'bonnet' himself, and left the room.

The waiter, gaping extravagantly, entered to remove the tumbler.

"Who is the gentleman that has just gone out ?"

The waiter seemed to think this inquiry a great joke ; he shook all over, convulsed with laughter ; he could hardly speak for laughter.

"Well, you are a funny one !" he said at length. "Don't go asking me who he is, pertending you don't know ! He's a queer fish, aint he ? I always said he was. I saw him when I was in London two years ago. Lor, he *do* make a feller laugh, don't he ? Ah ! you're right there—he do !" And he was gone with the empty tumbler. What did he mean, talking so mysteriously ?

It wanted two hours of dinner-time ; but I did not care to venture forth again into the wind, and the wet,

and the cold ; I waited in the coffee-room, trying to read Paterson's Road-book and a Postal Guide. I came to the conclusion that I had met with decidedly more interesting works.

They had not many ideas on the subject of dinners at the Middlington Arms Hotel. Visitors were shewn a long list of dishes; and after they had thoroughly studied it, and made themselves masters of it, and decided upon an elaborate array of *plats*, they were quietly informed that all they could have for dinner—the list being a mere cheerful form and of no particular use—was comprehended in a few attenuated whittings, served up with a freckle of bread-crumbs, and a steak of a flabby, fibrous material, stranded on a shallow sea of crimson, greasy gravy. To this inviting repast I sat down. Marrowfat I found was doomed to similar punishment at a small table by the window, as far removed from my small table as the dimensions of the room would permit.

I could just see Marrowfat's red face bending over his red steak ; I could even plainly hear Marrowfat's jaws clashing as he endeavoured to masticate his food. A young man entered the room, shabbily dressed in a coat that did not fit him, with a broken hat, weak, sore-looking eyes, and large hands that seemed to be all joints.

'All right, governor,' he said, addressing Marrowfat ; 'I've done all the *billing*!' (What was the *billing*?) 'But there's no one to come, and that's the fact. It is a deadly lively crib this Middlington. Gashly, I call it—quite. Hullo, though, here's a gent here that ain't had a bill !'

A red hand with prominent knuckle-bones thrust a bill before me. I read—

'The Eminent Buffo-singer, BOB WOFFLES, in the Provinces! Comic Singing of the First Quality! Here's a Treat! Be in Time! &c.'

The distinguished Comic Vocalist, B. WOFFLES, has been at last persuaded to relinquish many metropolitan engagements of extreme importance, in order to undertake a monster provincial tour. The whole of the arrangements of this tour are intrusted to B. WOFFLES's agent, AUGUSTUS MACKLEBOY, Esq., 119 Belgrave Square, New Upper Hoxton, N., to whom may be procured the words and music of the whole of B. Woffles's facetious *repertoire*, including the mirth-provoking buffa ditty of *How are you all at Home?* the characteristic scene of *A Penny a Lot!* and the screaming *Oh, won't I tell your Mother!*

*Fixtures of the eminent B. Woffles:*

Wapshot, August 27th; Wednesday, 28th and 29th; Goole, 30th; Biggleswade, September 1st; Cuckfield, 2d; Birkenhead, 3d and 4th; Congleton, 5th; Pontypool, 6th; Staley Bridge, 8th; Nottingham, 9th; Wakefield, 10th; Middlington, 11th, &c.

'All letters (prepaid and enclosing postage-stamp for reply) to be addressed to A. Mackleboy, Esq., as above.'

*N.B.*—The art of comic, sentimental, and characteristic singing taught by A. M., including the necessary dances between the verses.

*P.S.*—Private lessons, if required.'

It was evident, then; my fat friend—he was Marrowfat no longer—was the eminent buffo Bob Woffles. The shabby young man was probably the agent and manager of that vocalist, Augustus Mackleboy, Esq., of Belgrave Square, New Upper Hoxton, N. To sing at Middlington Assembly Rooms was part of the fixtures (What is a fixture?) of Mr Woffles.

Did he feel that he had deceived me? Clearly, he had never led me to believe that he was a comic vocalist. He averted his eyes, trying to eat his steak ; he conversed with his agent, and they drank together several brown brandies.

A very small audience was sprinkled over the benches of the Assembly Rooms, and yet I think nearly the whole population of Middlington was

present. Of course, I made a point of being there. I sat next to an individual in the fishing-interest, who was possessed of the loudest laugh and the most powerful marine odour that I think ever came under my notice or my nose. Very near sat the ancient chambermaid, not much moved to mirth, and evidently distressed in mind from being detached, though only temporarily, from her favourite battered candlestick. The moth-eaten waiter looked in occasionally and furtively, to give a frenzied laugh, and disappear again. Mr Mackleboy took money at a pigeon-hole close to the entrance, only to rush out and receive back the check he had given in exchange in another portion of the building. Certainly he was a most painstaking and indefatigable agent and manager.

Mr Woffles was almost the sole attraction of his monster tour. There was a thin insane man, with lank hair and a debilitated drooping moustache, who played solo upon the harmonium, and accompanied the eminent *bufō*'s singing on the piano. It seemed to me that he was under strict injunctions to laugh at all Mr Woffles said, or sung, or did. He accomplished this in a feeble, broken, disjointed way that was exceedingly painful. But I believe it is held to be the right thing for the accompanist to laugh on these occasions ; and he is accordingly paid to do it. It has a good effect upon the audience, who immediately exclaim : 'Dear me, it *must* be funny. Why, see the man who accompanies him, and hears him every night—why, even *he* can't help laughing.' There was a short young lady of about ten, in flaxen ringlets, and a white short dress tied with pink ribbons, who possessed an acridulated expression that was quite full grown, it was so intense, and played upon the concertina *O where and O where*, &c., with variations of the most aggravating intricacy. And now and then, by way of filling out the programme, and as a relief and foil to Mr Woffles, Augustus Mackleboy would rush from his pigeon-hole to the platform, and howl forth the most dismal tenor song he could think of ; and having wrought his audience to the extremest pitch of suffering, he would send on Mr Woffles as a balm and antidote to them. But amidst all his comic singing, eccentric posturing, and extravagant dancing, Mr Woffles, I could see, was the same fat sad man. His small black eyes perhaps acquired an additional twinkle from his exertions, but his old melancholy expression never deserted him. Certainly the small audience rewarded his efforts with shrieks of laughter. And he was funny. There was an appearance of humour in this fat, stolid, sad-looking man unsympathetically doing these droll things, that was striking. When the serious-looking Woffles clothed himself in rags, and affected to be a comic crossing-sweeper performing a comic dance with his broom, or when he appeared as a tipsy policeman with a long pipe and a powder pot, the situations seemed to be so foreign to the appearance and character of the man, that there was something irresistibly laughable about the whole business. The audience laughed and applauded lustily, and I confess I joined them.

'Whatever you do,' Mr Woffles, with the severest seriousness, addressed me afterwards at the hotel—'whatever you do, don't, my dear sir, don't take to comic singing ; don't be tempted to it by any consideration.'

I replied, modestly, that I had not, and that I did not think I could acquire the requisite talent. He received this observation almost scornfully.

'It don't require talent,' he answered ; 'that's the last thing it wants. Say a loud voice and a strong leg ; there's nothing more needed. Have I talent for it? No. You know I haven't ; you, more than any man. Stay! have a glass with me ; do. Thank you, my dear sir. Waiter! brown brandies for two. I saw you in the hall : you laughed ; it was very good

of you. I had my eye upon you ; I may say I played to you. You applauded ; it was most kind. But you know there was nothing funny in it ; you know me better than that. Ah ! here come the brandies.'

'But, Mr Woffles' —

'Don't, please, don't you call me Woffles. It's not my name ; you know that.'

'Marrowfat, then !' I said with effort.

'No, not Marrowfat—though it might have been : a very good name Marrowfat. Thank you ! But it's not Marrowfat—it's Brown. But they told me that Woffles was the right name for a comic singer, and when I took up the line, of course I became Woffles. And what led me to comic singing ? You're right ; it is not a pursuit congenial to my turn of mind. I have no predisposition to be funny ; I have no humour. I am simply a fat man who sings in public, to audiences that laugh. Why do I do this ? I will tell you. Years ago, I was a happy man, a common-law clerk to an eminent firm in Bedford Row. I was induced to become a member of the Common Law Clerks' Mutual Benefit and Comic Brotherhood Club. It was an indispensable condition that every member of the C. L. C. M. B. C. B. C. should sing a song on his introduction to the society. I was—I am—I have always been a man of a serious nature. Still a song was necessary, and I sang one—*The Cats' Meal Man*. You may have heard of it. Well, sir, date my ruin from then. I was loudly applauded ; every man in the room broke his runner thumping on the table approval of that song. I went on from bad to worse, all in violence to my own inclinations, I assure you. My family grew up around me ; I am the father of twelve. I became a buffo—I took the name of Woffles. I make a large income. I am one of the most miserable men living, though a distinguished comic vocalist on a monster tour. The public are kind enough to laugh at me ; but I have never known a happy hour since I sung *The Cats' Meal Man* at the C. L. C. M. B. C. B. C. I sing to-morrow night at Pocklington. I shall be off in the morning. Good-night, Mr —'

He paused. I told him my name. He received the information with evident surprise.

'Dear me !' he said, 'not — ? I thought it had been —. How very surprising ! You're sure it is not — ?'

And he mentioned a name by which he had been in the habit of mentally recognising me—a name founded upon what he was pleased to consider a personal peculiarity of mine. I had never dreamed that any one could possibly call me by such a name as that.

It was not a complimentary name ; moreover, I hold it to have been a singularly inappropriate name. Under these circumstances, the reader will perhaps hardly feel surprise at my withholding it from publication.

#### S H O E S A N D B O O T S .

THIS is an advertising age. Puffs collusive, puffs audacious, puffs authoritative, puffs insinuating, pervade the whole cycle of literature. Prudent men peruse the newspaper with a frowning determination not to be taken in, and see an advertisement in paragraphs the most speciously innocent. Indeed, they are not far wrong. *Latet anguis in herba*. There are snakes in grass of the greenest and most inviting character. We never peruse a thrilling 'Encounter with a Tiger,' without suspecting that a recommendation of somebody's gun-wadding may form the gist of the narrative. Never do we glance at a romantic episode concerning beauty, love, and marriage, without a dread that Rowland's Kalydor, or Nathan Amandine, may lurk beneath the surface of the tale. Even the Oldest Inhabitant is liable to suspicion, however amazing his longevity, for may not his earthly pilgrimage prove to have owed its prolixity to the extraordinary virtues of

Parr's Life Pills, sold by all respectable druggists in town or country ? Acknowledging this, and owning the prevalence of puffs, it is with some natural trepidation that I put forth my modest title to a fraction of popular notice. Shoes and Boots ! I may be taken for an ally of Mr Sparkes Hall, the 'scientific bootmaker,' and author of a charming pamphlet on the integuments of the human foot. I may be regarded as one of the patentees of the *Pannus Corium*, eager to force my registered material upon an incredulous public, and heretically dissenting from the proverb which attests that 'there is nothing like leather.'

Let me, however, hasten to protest that such guesses would be wide of the mark. Simply, and in matter-of-fact style, I wish to give a brief history of shoes and boots, from the earliest ages down to the present time.

The most ancient covering for the foot is undoubtedly the sandal ; indeed, it is doubtful whether simplicity could have been pushed to a greater extent, if the pedal extremities were to be protected at all. The sandal, in its primitive form, was a mere oblong of leather or of wood, guarding the sole of the foot from abrasion. It was kept in its place by a strap crossing the great-toe, and was further secured by a multitude of thongs which were bound round the ankle. The upper part of the foot was left bare ; and it is easy to see that, however indifferently such a device might answer for a hard road or stony desert, it was most unfit for wearers whose mode of life compelled them to plunge through swamps and thorny thickets. Accordingly, the sandal, which originated in the East, and which, to the best of our knowledge, is the only shoe alluded to in the Bible, was greatly modified during the course of its adoption by the nations of the West. The classic sandal in its integrity was soon left to the Oriental provinces of the empire, while the Romans donned a species of shoe, capable of covering at least the instep, and which gradually became more comfortable. Even in the old days of Attic freedom, the *cothurnus*, the 'lotty buskin' of the tragic actor, had become a recognised feature in the Greek drama, and from these theatrical articles of attire were probably borrowed the boots worn by persons of patrician rank under the successors of Augustus. To this day, the sandal is worn by some of those primitive races whose scanty measure of civilisation is all derived from Rome. The Illyrians, the Croats of the southern frontier, the Wallachians, and also the Spanish mountaineers of Basque and Aragon, wear the quaint old sandal, with its interlaced thongs, its thick sole, and its barbaric discomfort. But the luxurious population of Rome soon began to improve on the old model. Shoes were soon constructed of costly materials, clasped and embroidered in gold, and bedecked lavishly with ornament. The manufacture was no longer confined to the household, or to artisans of the rudest skill ; it became a science, with its rules, its secrets, and its accredited professors. Juvenal advised the cobbler not to go beyond his shoe, and indeed if the satirical poets are to be relied on, the *sutores* of Rome must have had enough to do to satisfy the capricious and haughty dames of patrician descent, without dabbling in matters unprofessional. In the Lower Empire, as organised by Constantine and Justinian, the colour of boots was a matter of no trifling import. The emperor's own sacred feet were graced by purple buskins ; those of his associates in dignity, the Caesar and Augustus, were of the same Tyrian dye. Great courtiers and generals were permitted to tinge their buskins red ; and the boots of the commonalty were ordered to be of duskier hues, though the bulk of the nation still adhered to the antique sandal, more or less modified.

Meanwhile, our Gothic ancestors were marching on sandalled feet to the conquest of the sinking empire. Not that the Gothic sandal was identical with that of the Aramaic and Hellenic races ; that Eastern fabric would not have answered among the impenetrable

forests, the tangled brakes, and drear morasses of Hercynia and Batavia. The feet of the Teutonic tribes were guarded by such a quantity of broad thongs crossing and recrossing the foot, and then interlacing around the ankle till they nearly reached the knee, that they were tolerably proof against thorns and the bite of reptiles; and, indeed, their style of footgear might have been classed less as a true sandal than as a shoe and gaiter put on in a slow and tedious manner. Meanwhile, other parts of the world had not been backward in invention. The Scythian horsemen, whose multitudes began to blacken the outskirts of the Roman dominions, were booted Tartars, one and all, whether they called themselves Huns or Avars, Turks or Oghars. Indeed, the long boot of sheep-skin appears to have been the earliest traditional foot-covering of this pastoral and roving race. The peasantry of Gaul were gradually turning their sandals into the wooden shoe, craftily hollowed out of the tough stem of a tree, which we see them wear to this hour under the name of sabot. Already the Hindoo was shuffling in dainty slippers about the marble courts of his zenanas, and already the Chinaman rejoiced in those surprising boots which suffice him to the present time. The latter, with their soles of incredible thickness, formed of pith, or more often of some wood of a light character, appear grotesque in our eyes, but to a dandy of Pekin, they are satisfactory enough. They are certainly convenient in so muddy a country as China; and although black satin is the usual material of what it may seem Hibernian to call the 'upper leathers,' yet satin is probably cheaper in Cathay than humble calf-skin in our own markets, and Ching and Chang will probably adhere for a generation or two to the old modes.

Of Chinese shoe feminine, it is impossible to speak with toleration. Those unnatural structures, in shape and size not unlike the hoof of a horse, may be, and often are, prettily wrought, and lavishly adorned; but what avail seed-pears and gold thread, and all that floss-silk, jewels, spotties feathers, and costly silks, to decorate an avowed monstrosity, and shed beauty upon distortion of the limbs? Perhaps there never was a custom so utterly devoid of sense as that of squeezing the women's feet into a fashionable shape, and yet how rooted it is, and how useless has it hitherto proved to talk against it on grounds of ridicule and sanitary science! What does Ching care for the opinion of Sir Benjamin Brodie? And how many prejudices would Chang resign at the bidding of the *Times* or the invocation of *Punch*? Missionaries and surgeons have hitherto had about as much success in their crusade against the 'small-footed,' as Mrs. Colonel Bloomer in England, or as a Moalem *hakim* would have who should visit London to preach against tight-lacing. But Fashion is a fairy capable of taking off spells as well as of imposing them; and now that we have forced our acquaintance on sullen and auspicious China, we may hope that, in a few years, the Buddhist belles will import their *brodequins* from Paris, and that the quaint old torture will come to an end at last. In Asia, Africa, and Polynesia, it must be owned that there is little to be said of the shoes of the generality of the people: they mostly go barefoot. In India, the rivot guides his rude plough with naked feet; the Bheel wood-cutter, the Gond junglewallah, the post-runner, the dhoolie bearers, the Lascars, sweepers, servants, the *people* in short, go barefoot throughout the peninsula. Even Jack Sepoy, when parade was over, and the white cotton replaced the scarlet cloth, delighted to kick off his shoes, and free his feet from obnoxious leather. It is your *blhua admee*, your 'respectable man,' *baboo* or *moonthee*, or dealer in the bazaar, or secretary to somebody, who makes a point of wearing slippers, and he usually shuffles about in an uncomfortable way, as if he longed to be rid of them. So in the Pacific Isles, the missionaries had no light work

to induce the converts to give up the practice of going barefoot, a custom which reminded them of their lax old heathen ways. So in the Cape Colony, where the Caffres and Griquas travel at a swinging trot over stones, cactus-plants, stumps, and thorns, as if their epidermis were as solid as that of their neighbour the rhinoceros. In the Antilles, in Guinea, and in most other tropical countries, shoes are scarce indeed. In Abyssinia, the king and nobles are certainly shod, but the 'million' go shoeless to labour and the chase, and the Arab camel-driver prefers to tread the hot sand with a bare foot.

The West India regiments draw most of their privates from the Gold Coast of Africa, where the tall Coronante black is found to possess more vigour of body and mind than the languid creole negro of the islands. But these sable recruits have one terrible ordeal to get over—the shoe! This is a badge of civilisation which, very literally, galls their souls. They cry over their shoes. They kick them off surreptitiously, they hide them, they desert expressly to escape their shoes, they 'malinge' their way into hospital, preferring a sham sick-bed to the reality of shoe-wearing. In all respects they are good soldiers, save only with reference to shoes. To be sure, Sambo objects to weight borne on the back, and has a trick of placing his knapsack on his woolly head; but this is soon got over, compared to the time it takes an African black to be reconciled to shoes. Much of a sailor's duty is also performed without shoes; and it would be easy to point out a thousand tribes who abjure all protection for their feet. Shoes are little worn in Barbary; the Moors and Kabyles cross the most flinty mountains barefoot, and yet the principal Algerine chiefs are prouder of their enormous boots than of any other article of attire. This applies to the sheiks of the Sahara alone, for the Moorish gentry in towns wear slippers of Turkish pattern.

It is at Constantinople that shoemaking reaches its sublimest pitch, and soars into absolute poetry. The bazaars display thousands of pairs of slippers, delicate and small enough to fit Cinderella's self, and of a dazzling splendour. The bearded and turbaned artisans under whose fingers those cunning structures develop themselves, must have a painter's soul beneath their caftans. Velvet slippers, silk slippers, cloth slippers, slippers of woven grass, slippers of Taflet leather, slippers of crimson, of pink, of orange, white, azure, purple, of all colours except the sacred green, which may not be profaned by such usage. Slippers royally embroidered in gold, brightly braided in silver, jewelled with ruby and turquoise, tufted with dainty down from the wild-swan's breast of snow, wrought in seed-pears, the whitest that Oman and Serendib can supply. There are some slippers that seem to emulate the gorgeous colouring of gaudy insects, the glorious mail of the dragon-fly, the gold powdered purple of the emperor butterfly; there are others as chastely beautiful as the pale pinkish shell on the sea-shore; others again so elaborate, that months must have been required for the patient needle to elaborate those golden sprays of flower, to combine that intricate scroll of pearl-work, to complete that Arabic flourish. What sort of feet are worthy of those radiant coverings—feet of nymphs, or peris, or actual bona-fide women of this matter-of-fact, mutton-chop world we live in? At anyrate, they must be small, shapely, and fair to look upon; and it is a fact that Turkish feet are remarkably delicate in both sexes. Those superb shoes are not all for female wear; some of the simplest—mere crimson or violet velvet stiffened with gold and floss-silk, till little of the groundwork is left visible under the mass of the needlework—are meant for dandy boys and gay young agas of fashion. True, the degenerate pachas and other officials prefer to buy their boots in the Rue Rivoli, but still the slipper-trade is a gainful one. Besides the splendid fabrics I have spoken of, and which are worn by sultanas

and ladies of rank, there are everywhere exposed for sale whole mountains of the yellow slippers and yellow leather socks which Turkish women alone may wear, the red slippers popular with male Mohammedans, and the dull black or purple shoes to which the Greeks and Armenians are legally restricted. No Christian may wear yellow shoes, on pain of the bastinado, without he be a dragoman, or under European protection; but now-a-days every non-Mohammedan who can afford it, buys first his *berath* of naturalisation, and then a sufficiency of French boots and bottines for himself and family. So, in the palmy-days of persecution, Jews and Cagots, in some of the most civilised realms of Christian Europe, were compelled to wear shoes of a peculiar hue, as a badge of proscription.

The natives of some countries appear to have been forced to exert their inventive powers in improving their foot-coverings, from the very nature of the life they lead. Thus, the Arabs of Nejd, leading a life of unceasing warfare, encase their chief warriors in heavy armour, and even plate their boots with steel scales, until their invulnerability throws that of Achilles into shadow. The Tartars of Bokhara and Khiva have the soles of their boots garnished with sharp steel prongs, like the spikes of cricket-shoes, to enable them to traverse glaciers and icy wastes impassable to cavalry. The Red Indians of Canada, and the people of Scandinavian Europe, independently discovered the use of those well-known snow-shoes called Skidor in the Norse tongue, by the aid of which the hunter can float lightly and swiftly, like a web-footed bird, over the deep snows that would otherwise engulf him. The skate, supposed to be an invention of the Danes or Dutch, is another instance in which man's ingenuity has taken advantage of the very rigours of the seasons; while the Roman soldier wore shoes, with soles thickly studded with nails, the advantage of which he found in the passage of a marsh or the scaling of mountains. The moccasin of the North American Indian is a singular exception to the general rule, that all shoes are improvements on the ancient sandal. To this day, a savage will frequently renew his moccasins by adjusting on his feet portions of the pliant skin of a freshly slain deer or bison, and tying a thong or sinew around his ankles, compels the undressed hide to shape itself upon its animated last. This is merely the roughest form of the moccasin, indeed, for the Indian women are adepts in their manufacture; and often produce very neat specimens of their craft, made of dressed deerskin of beautiful softness, bleached, embroidered with beads, ornamented with furs and bright party-coloured quills, stitched with the sinews of deer, and soled with the strong *parfache* of the buffalo. But whether rude or prettily adorned, the moccasin seems a new-world device, not borrowed from the fashions of the eastern hemisphere. Curiously enough, the *Indios Mazos* of Mexico, descendants of the Aztecs, wear a rude sandal; while their brethren of Spanish South America either go entirely barefoot, or assume a shoe of straw, plaited grass, or other vegetable material, sometimes decorated with great taste and fancy, but very dissimilar to sandals or the true moccasin.

Cesar, in describing the tattooed savages of Kent and Middlesex, their bee-hive huts, their copper swords, their scythe-bearing chariots, and their hideous adornment of the blue dye of woad, omits to notice their shoes. Roman history, which gives us a faint idea of the mantles, the paint, the long hair and tangled beards of our Celtic predecessors, ignores their shoes utterly. Possibly they wore none. Perhaps, on the other hand, they wore sandals, since we know how frequent was the communication between Britain and Armorica, as well as with Northern Gaul and Belgica; and it is likely that the peculiarities of the people alone struck the invaders, to the exclusion of those points in which the islanders resembled their

neighbours. At anyrate, the Romans conquered, and the subjugated Britons adopted their modes of dress. The sandal had probably given place to the shoe, when the last legion was withdrawn, and the Roman was succeeded by the Saxon. During the exceedingly dark ages that followed, it is seldom that a gleam of light falls on any fashion but that of armour. Still, we gather that shoes were worn at least as early as the reign of Canute over an Anglo-Danish England; and we know that the court of Edward the Confessor copied the Norman dress with servile exactness. It appears, therefore, that at the time of the Norman Conquest, boots and shoes, more or less rich and fanciful, were worn by the Saxon thanes; while the earls, or peasants, followed the plough in strong shoes; and the theowes, or slaves, went habitually barefoot. The hardy mountaineers of Wales, who seldom wore any covering on their feet, are expressly stated to have outstripped the pursuit of the heavily armed English soldiers, among their native crags, in consequence of their contempt for shoes; while the Scottish borderers obtained the well-known name of 'Roughfeet,' from their habit of wearing a sort of shaggy buskin of red deer's hide with the hair on.

The Normans, always prone to extravagance in apparel, were especially dainty in all that related to their shoes and boots; indeed, from the reign of Rufus to the Tudor epoch, fashion was permitted to play some of the most singular freaks in this respect that ever human caprice devised. During some Plantagenet reigns, the toes of knightly shoes were turned up in imitation of a ram's horn; and in extreme cases, the points were absolutely linked with golden chains to the knees of the chivalrous wearer, who was of course debarred from keeping his feet in the stirrups when on horseback. Under other princes, they spread out as broadly as the plumage of a fan-tailed pigeon. Again, they were worn long and pointed as the bill of a crane. They were made of velvet, of silk, of cloth, of leather, of linen, and of canvas. There were red, white, blue, pink, green, and party-coloured. They were jewelled, they were stitched with pearls, they were wrought in prodigal splendour with gold, silk, and silver. They were furred with the spoils of marten, bear, wild-cat, ermine, and squirrel—with miniver, lettuce, sable, and unknown furs brought by Venetian merchants from the far East. Sometimes one shoe was blue, and the other red; sometimes one foot was resplendent in pea-green, while the other glowed vermilion. Ecclesiastics were noted for the magnificence of their shoes of white or violet velvet, decorated by large crosses wrought in gold thread. We have a relic of this fashion in that famous papal slipper which is still saluted by the devout, and which is similarly adorned. Meanwhile the steel boots of the knights grew stronger and stronger; from mere lozenges of iron on a leather foundation, they gradually turned to the broad-toed structures of steel which a few collections still can exhibit. Henry VIII wore very rich shoes, wrought with his badge—the Rose. Pizarro, the filibustering conqueror of Peru, was painted in his usual garb; and to this day his picture shews us the glistening white shoes, clasped with diamonds, which he loved to wear. During the Tudor reigns, immoderate quantities of ribbon were used to decorate the shoes, generally of a gay colour, such as carnation or light-blue. Francis I was a good customer to the ribbon-weavers, and even the haughty Spaniards gradually learned to bedeck their shoes with huge rosettes, after the French pattern. In Elizabeth's reign, came in the Spanish boot or buskin, that wide-topped, theatrical, showy device with which paintings and the theatre have made our age familiar, and which, from its fancied resemblance to a funnel, the French called the 'botte à l'entonnoir.' In its most perfect condition, it was made of milk-white Cordova leather,

decorated with gold or silver spurs, stitched with silver, and edged with a deep fall of costly lace. But it was more often of buff or cream-coloured leather, and sometimes of red or black. The gallants of Paris long adhered to this fashion, which was worn by the English cavaliers of the two first Stuart reigns. Then came in the long black or brown boot of the Puritan warriors—heavy, plain, brass-bound, steel-heeled, for use, and not for show. To this, and to the shining square-toed black shoe which was invariably adopted by London citizens and apprentices, succeeded the satin and Spanish leather shoes, the morocco boots, and gay bravery, of the Restoration.

The Celtic races, whether in Ireland or the Highlands, were for the most part barefooted at the close of the seventeenth century. The only shoe known among the mountaineers was the 'brogue,' a loose and ill-made article of attire, seldom worn except on holiday occasions. A surprising number of the lower class in England were also shoeless; but the well-to-do peasant, and still more the yeoman, was proud of his leather footgear, and boasted that he was not forced to shuffle in wooden shoes, like the French. To this day, Orangemen thank King William for saving Ireland from the ignominy of 'wooden shoes'; and during the period of Charles II.'s mercenary subervience to Louis XIV., great turmoil was excited in the House of Commons when some wag contrived slyly to suspend a *wooden shoe*, the badge of French domination, over the Speaker's chair. About the time of the revolution of 1689, red heels were introduced, and were adopted with enthusiasm. English, French, and Spaniards, Dutch and Germans, went crazy after red-heeled shoes. Ladies wore them, cavaliers strutted in them, princes never appeared without them, and they became the *ne plus ultra* of martial dandism. Kings and heroes, Louis, Marlborough, Villars, wore red heels, and in vain did the clergy devote floods of pulpit eloquence to their suppression. Heels grew redder and higher, year after year, until the mode wore itself out. Nor did white and coloured shoes go out for a long time. Lord Cornwallis, when viceroy of Ireland in 1798, was painted in white shoes; Louis XV. had his portrait taken in white shoes.

But the black shoe, once only the wear of citizens, gradually supplanted all the rest. For a long time, all shoes were buckled; princes and princesses, courtiers and great ladies, had diamond buckles. Those persons, male and female, who loved to ape magnificence cheaply, wore sparkling paste. Merchants of note on 'Change, or rich landowners, had buckles of gold; well-to-do shopkeepers adopted silver; and while the farmer's shoes were buckled with shining steel, the poor were forced to content themselves with black iron or brass. But buckles were imperative. When poor Louis XVI., in the throes of the Revolution, was compelled to receive Roland as his minister, Roland had a severe controversy with the court-marshal before he could make his way, in shoes merely tied with strings, into the royal presence. Canning penned a severe sarcasm on the French *parvenu* statesman, which was published in the *Anti-Jacobin*, and which was thought to be very apposite and keen, though time has blunted its sting.

Roland the Just, with *ribbons* in his shoes, no doubt conveyed an amount of witty irony to the buckled fops of the St James's Street of seventy years back, which we live three-quarters of a century too late to appreciate. Then everybody took to shoe-strings, and the buckle-makers were ruined, and stunned the king and parliament with their clamorous prayers that shoe-strings should be forbidden under penalties. In boots, England then set the fashion. Substantial Britons wore top-boots even on 'Change and in the city of London. France borrowed the fashion in the Anglo-mania just before

the Revolution; and hence it was that Danton, in top-boots, thundered from the tribune for more heads, and that Hoche, also in top-boots, rushed to repel the enemy from the Rhine. Next, we adopted from Germany the Hessian boot, with its tassels and its black shiny surface, and the French speedily followed our example. It was in Hessians that our fathers rejoiced for peace and victory; but then came in the Blucher-boot, in compliment to our bold ally, Marshal 'Vorwärts,' and the more permanent Wellington, which promises to perpetuate itself. Since then, we have seen few idle vagaries, and many legitimate improvements. Balmorals and kid-boots for ladies, India-rubber goloshes, and so forth, have been produced less for whim's sake, than for downright purposes of health and convenience. Perhaps Fashion, weary of kaleidoscopic changes, has mercifully resolved for the future to make common-sense her vicegerent over the realms of St Crispin.

## MYSELF AND MY RELATIVES.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE STORY AT THE FIRESIDE.

To amuse us, he sometimes told us stories in evenings while mamma was busy working, darning dreadfully dilapidated stockings, mending torn frocks, or acting the part of cobbler upon old shoes. One night she had a headache, and retired to rest much earlier than usual, and being alone with papa, as the rest of the children had gone to bed, I asked him to tell me a story.

'A nice long romantic story,' said I, putting my arms round his neck, for I thought he looked sorrowful as he sat at the fire.

'Very well,' he replied, stirring the coal to make a blaze.

I ran and put the candle out—we never burned a pair together—and drawing a stool near to papa's chair, leaned my head against his arm while he spoke.

'There was once upon a time, Jessie, an elderly man of eccentric habits, who had a son called Robert, and this son grew up with the idea that his father was unfeeling and unreasonable, as his mother, who was a Frenchwoman, fond of gaiety and frivolity, sought to screen him from punishment whenever he was guilty of doing wrong, and was in the habit of petting him tenfold after his father had chid him for a fault. So Robert thought his father both cruel and foolish, and always shrank out of the room where he was, particularly if his mother was not present. Frequently he heard angry disputes between his parents, and his mother was often very violent in her passions. The boy thought she was always in the right, and his blood would boil angrily when he beheld her crying and sobbing, while his father only looked immovably stern, with a pale face and a flashing eye. One day there was a greater quarrel than ever; very loud words were spoken on both sides. Robert was not in the room with his parents, but he heard some of the sentences uttered, as he stood trembling in the lobby.

"Woman!" cried his father in a hoarse strange voice, "you and your boy may quit this roof for ever! Begone as soon as you like; I will never try to detain you!"

"Yes," spoke the mother, "and when I go, I shall rejoice that I am at last revenged!"

She then rushed out of the room, ran towards her son, and pulling him into another apartment, shut both him and herself up. He was then about nine years old.

"His mother's face was white with fury, her eyes sparkling, and the veins in her temples standing out like ropes. She looked like an insane creature, wild

and fearful. Robert's heart beat, and he felt that his father must be a woefully cruel man to cause his dear mamma to become so excited. All that day she stayed in her room, and no one could persuade her to eat or drink. During the afternoon, Robert heard his father order a servant to go for Mr Spurnheim, the lawyer who generally managed his affairs; and so Mr Spurnheim came, and they were both closeted together for a long while in the library, engaged in some entralling business. At last they separated. Mr Spurnheim looked curiously at Robert when he passed him on the stairs, and the boy remarked it, but he did not know till years afterwards what had been done against him that day in the library. He went up in the evening to his mother, and sat close by her side, hoping she was not going to lose her senses, for her eyes had a strange glassy look. Neither of them went to dinner or supper, and there was a gloomy silence all over the house. Even the servants went up and down softly, with grave faces, for they knew their master and mistress had quarrelled seriously. When it grew late, Robert went to bed, and when passing to his own room he heard his father walking to and fro in his apartment with a hurried step. He longed to burst into the room and say: "O papa, can't you and mamma make up and be good friends again? And I am sure you would both be far happier than you are now!" But of course he dared not do such a thing; so he walked on up to his own chamber, and went to bed.

In the night, a great deal happened that Robert didn't know of, for he soon fell fast asleep, and did not waken till it was far advanced in the day. There seemed a bustle below stairs when he awoke, a commotion of people hurrying hither and thither, that struck him with misgiving. He thought of his mother, and fearing she might be ill, arose and dressed in all haste, cautiously leaving his room. Just then, the lobbies and staircase seemed deserted; he ran down the first flight without seeing any one. For a long time he stood on the lobby leading to his father's bedroom. The door of the chamber was wide open, all seemed silent within. Scarcely knowing why, Robert advanced towards it and peered in, though not expecting to meet any one there. How long he stood in the doorway, he never could tell, for the sight he beheld petrified him. The windows of the room were open, the curtains of the bed quite drawn back, and the form of a stiff dead man lay stretched on the bed, covered by a sheet. Robert had once before seen a dead man, his father's old gardener, who had died about a year before, and he knew the aspect of death very well. Walking on tip-toe, breathless, aghast, he moved nearer and nearer to the bed. It was his father's corpse that lay there, the upturned face paler than ever it had been before, the eyes firmly closed, the countenance marble-like, but stern as ever. Robert fell upon his knees at the bedside and cried: "Father! father! forgive me for all I have done against you!" But the dead could not speak, Jessie, and the boy had no reason to think he was pardoned.

My father stopped now, and said he would tell me no more of the story to-night; but I entreated him to go on—throwing additional coal on the fire, and putting in a bit of wood to make a cheery blaze—whereupon, seeing me so much interested in the nice romantic tale, he continued.

"Well, Robert knelt there till some one came and drew him away, and he was brought to his mother, who was in a highly hysterical state in her own room. The boy learned that a fit of apoplexy had carried off his father in the night, and he was now an orphan, and far worse off than he knew himself to be. There was a funeral, and a gathering together of friends and relatives, and the will was read; after which, in about a fortnight, Robert and his mother left the fine large mansion where they had lived so long, never to return to it again. The boy was sent to school, and in the

vacations visited his mother in her new house, which was situated in a pleasant town on the continent. He did not now find her so indulgent as formerly; she was often harsh to him, and once or twice called him a troublesome beggar, and a burden, and a variety of other names that hurt the poor boy's pride. "But, mother," said he one day, "have I no money of my own? My father had a large fortune, and where has it all gone to? Did he leave his only child destitute?" "He did!" shrieked the mother. "He left you a wretched burden on my income: you are nothing but a beggar!" Robert of course felt most wretched, yet he loved his mother still, but for which affection he would have run away and become a sailor or a soldier, or perhaps something still lower. She spent a gay life; her house was the resort of many Englishmen, who thronged her drawing-rooms day after day. Robert soon found that she was ashamed of having so old-looking a son, and he was glad when she procured for him a commission in a foreign service, which necessitated his removal to another part of the continent. Yet he felt that he was a friendless young man; and the image of his father's dead body, as he had seen it first, rose often before his fancy like a hideous vision. He had no counsellor to guide, no one to warn him against the evils that beset the path of youth. Temptation upon temptation ensnared him; he gambled, he won a little, but he lost far more; and a wicked companion led him on in vice, first beginning by robbing him, then ending by blackening his character. This companion was a Frenchman, enrolled in the same corps as himself; he was a man very young in years, but old in the world's ways. A gambler and a spendthrift, he overreached those with whom he had dealings, and never paid his debts when he could help it. Robert and he frequented the gaming-houses in the towns where they were quartered, till remorse seized the former, and he thought of abandoning his evil practices. About this time, a letter reached him from his mother, containing these words, or something like them: "My dear son, when this reaches you, I shall probably not be a living creature. What little money I possess, I have bequeathed to you. Poor boy! you owe your mother nothing; you should abhor her memory. Since your infancy, she has been your ruin. To her you are indebted for losing your inheritance, and being now a poor man instead of a wealthy one! In my passionate anger, I declared one day to your father that I wished to leave his house, and bring you with me, as you were not his son, and had therefore no claim on him. I gloried in wounding his pride by every means, even if it were only for a moment. I never dreamed he would believe my words, nor do I yet think it, but, full of a rage which would probably have passed off, he sent for his lawyer on the spot, and made a will disinheriting you, and leaving all his property, which was not entailed, to a cousin whom he had always esteemed. Doubtless, had he lived, he would have burned this document; but death cut him off the very night after it was finished, and it stands against you for ever! I met with a fearful accident yesterday; the doctors say I cannot survive many days. Come, my son, and see me buried."

Robert set off as fast as he could; and on arriving at his mother's residence, he found that, instead of being dead, she was recovering rapidly, and quite out of danger. All the repentance that her letter seemed to express had now vanished, since she was no longer afraid of dying, and she received her son coldly enough. She told him all that her letter had informed him of was true; that through her means he was a disinherited son, a man without position in the world, instead of being, what his birth had entitled him to be, a respectable country-gentleman in his fatherland, Old England. Very harshly did his mother treat him during this visit; she refused to give him any money

to pay his numerous debts, declaring that she was in debt herself. She reproached him bitterly for his want of prudence, and ended by insinuating he was disappointed that she was not dead. Robert returned to his regiment in a state of dejection, yet determined to steer clear of the temptation that had already nearly ruined him. Possessed of a fertile imagination, he endeavoured to write short poems and fugitive prose articles for publications in England, for which he received as much money as paid some of his most pressing debts; but his former friend now became an enemy, since he had given up his company. Evil reports were spread of him; it was whispered throughout the corps that he was a coward, and of dishonourable principles! He saw himself looked upon coldly by his associates, nay, almost shunned by them. Hints were given him that it would be advisable for him to withdraw from the corps. This maddened him. By accident, he discovered who the author of these foul slanders was, and furious with rage, determined to punish him. His enemy contemptuously refused to fight a duel with him. Robert declared that he was a coward and a scoundrel. A frightful quarrel ensued; it was in a *café* at night—Now, Jessie, go to bed.'

'O no, papa; I want so much to hear the end of the story. Do, please, go on.'

#### CHAPTER V.

##### THE STORY CONTINUED.

Robert seized a knife from a table, and in the wildest passion that ever blinded human reason, struck his antagonist with it. He fell; there was a cry of horror, and Robert felt himself hurried away, with shouts of, "He is dead!—he is killed!" ringing in his ears. "Fly!" whispered some one, who held him firmly by the arm, hurrying him through the silent streets of a filthy Italian town. "No," said Robert; "let me perish—let me die! What have I to fly for? Life is nothing to me!" "Would you die by the hand of the executioner?" replied his strong-armed friend, still bearing him on. That night, he left the town, and at daybreak was sailing for England. On reaching his native land, he was free, but almost penniless. In London, he endeavoured to obtain employment as a contributor to newspapers and magazines, and being a clever penman, he supported himself in this way, gaining some notoriety and friends by his literary productions. There was an old gentleman of considerable fortune who took a fancy to him, because he favourably reviewed a pamphlet he wrote in one of the leading journals of the day, and he invited him to pay him a visit at his house in the country. Robert accepted the invitation, and found that the old gentleman lived in good style, with numerous equipages and servants. He was hospitably entertained, and introduced to the beautiful granddaughter of the old gentleman, a young girl as guileless as she was lovely. Robert fell in love with her at first sight.'

'Was Robert handsome, papa?' I asked.

My father smiled.

'Yes; people called him handsome, and he knew it. The young girl looked kindly on him; and when her grandfather was sleeping on the sofa in the evenings, he was making love to her in one of the large bow-windows of the drawing-room. Her governess, an elderly woman, did not care much what she did; and her parents were both dead. She had brothers, but they were either in the army or at Oxford; so there was no one to interfere with Robert's love-making. It was an audacious undertaking—he, a penniless adventurer; she, the petted child of a wealthy house, one who might have found a husband among the highest families of the country. Robert knew well there would be no use in asking her grandfather's consent to their

marriage. He could not bear the idea of parting from her; his passion was uncontrollable; yet he well knew the evil that would befall her if he induced her to leave the luxury of that magnificent home, to share the poverty that was his portion. He was aware she loved him; he had drawn the confession from her. It was wrong of him to take advantage of her affection—wrong of him to ruin her prospects for his own selfish wishes; yet he did it all in blind ardour. They fled to Scotland, and were married there. That delicate girl, reared in wealth and luxury, guarded from the world's winds like a tender hothouse plant, linked her fate with a son of misfortune. Robert felt many a pang of remorse in after-years, when he looked at her fragile figure growing gradually more attenuated, and thought of what she had given up for his sake. Her family discarded her—brothers—grandfather—all! Her letters to them were returned to her unopened. They considered her a disgrace to them: they did not know that Robert had as good blood in his veins as themselves. Finding himself, as years passed on, in very straitened circumstances, he wrote to his father's cousin—who was in possession of the property which should have belonged to himself—stating to him how badly off he and his family were, for he had now some children who were to be clothed and fed. He never got any reply to his letter. Overwork at length laid him on a bed of sickness; he had a fever, and was for weeks unable to do anything. In the meantime, news reached him of the death of his mother, who left him about five hundred pounds; and being weary of the confined atmosphere of dark streets in London, he thought of taking a country-place, where he and his family could breathe fresh, pure air. His wife, in right of her mother, possessed a small sum of money, which, being sunk on her life, produced about thirty pounds a year: this was better than nothing; it helped to buy clothes for the family; but still they were miserably off. Their life was one continued struggle from year's end to year's end. They settled down in a very humble abode, remote from the civilised world, the wife becoming by degrees a mere household drudge: her accomplishments were forgotten or neglected; her bloom vanished early. Few who saw her in youth, ere she married, would have recognised her ten years afterwards. In disposition alone she remained the same—ever gentle, ever patient, ever uncomplaining. Never did she reproach the man who had thus destroyed her prospects. If she mourned her misfortunes, it must have been in secret; if she ever wept, it must have been when alone. And now, Jessie, there is nothing more for me to tell you. Have you not heard enough?'

As my father said this, he looked at me with an expression that puzzled me.

'Did you invent that story yourself, papa?' I asked, as I looked steadily at him.

'Yes; it is all my own story,' he replied, smiling curiously.

'How clever you must be, to be able to speak it all out that way without thinking of it; you must be equal to Robert that wrote stories!'

'And what did you think of this Robert, Jessie?'

'I thought he was much to be pitied. But you should have made him grow rich in the end, papa, and get back his own property; and his wife's family should have become reconciled to her.'

'That would indeed be more like the story of a novel, my little girl, but not like reality. Life is not a romance, Jessie: there may be many wild adventures in its course, but the end is seldom happy or prosperous. We begin in misfortune, and we often end in it too.'

It was now rather late; my eyes felt sore and sleepy, and the air had that chill sharp feel that comes in the depth of night. I retired softly to bed in my little closet, thinking of papa's story and mamma's headache,

and a curious idea flashed upon me that perhaps Robert was papa himself.

## CHAPTER VI.

## DISTRESS.

For a long time, our life glided on in the same course of quiet and poverty. I thought things would never change, and I longed for variety. Day after day was alike; we ate our breakfast, then dinner, then supper, then to bed; and so on from week to week, till months and years were added to the great pile of the past. No visitors; nothing came to rouse us from our loneliness. There were some changes which I remarked—such as our carpets growing more and more shabby, our old tea-kettle becoming more dingy, the lines in my mother's face more marked, my father's hair grayer and thinner; and on Sundays I saw that Mr Horne looked older and more infirm in the pulpit. These changes, however, were not pleasant; they only gave me cause for grave reflection. At fifteen, I thought myself quite a woman of a responsible age, and my head was filled with *chateaux en Espagne*. I had read a great deal, and my sisters owed to me nearly all the education they possessed. As I advanced in years, I began, of course, to think of my appearance, and to wish to be pretty. It was long before I could find out what people thought of me, or what I was entitled to think of myself. The small looking-glass in my bedroom revealed to me a face rather oval in shape; cheeks a little inclined to fullness, and barely tinged with a slight shade of pink; dark hair, thick, and decidedly glossy; eyes of a deep blue, rendered darker in effect by the brows and lashes that furnished them; a mouth considerably smaller than many other mouths I saw, and white and evenly set teeth. This may sound vain, but vanity does not consist in a knowledge of our own charms; it is rather connected with our appreciation of them—the value that we set upon them. I do not suppose it would have been a proof of modesty if I had fancied my nose was a snub, my face broad, and my mouth large, when such was not the case. I believe there are few lively people of either sex who have not, at some time or other of their lives, wished to attract admiration. Once or twice, I was gratified when people said of me, 'Ah! she is like her father,' because I knew papa was handsome; and once, when Rachel told me that Mrs Webb, our neighbour at Thorn Grange, said I was the 'most beautiful young lady she had seen for many a year,' I felt my heart bound with delight. Good Mrs Webb never paid a visit to our cottage, save upon one occasion, which I shall speak more particularly of in its own place; but mamma and she exchanged civilities very often, and papa was frequently at Thorn Grange, seeking advice upon farming-subjects from Mr Webb, who skilfully managed upwards of three hundred acres of land himself. Mamma possessed considerable knowledge of infantile ailments, and Mrs Webb's gratitude was won by her treatment of sundry little Tommies and Follies during the measles and hooping-cough; not that my mother ever descended to visit the farm in person—she merely sent her medical advice by written recipes, assisted by various bottles of physic concocted by herself. Mr Webb had always told papa, that it would be impossible for him to make any profit of a farm so small as that which was attached to our cottage; and at last my father was obliged to agree with him, after suffering considerable loss during the process of learning by experience. The end of it was, that he let all the land except the lawn and garden, sold off all the cattle to pay debts, and began again to write for periodicals, as he had done before leaving London. Having a taste for literature, I assisted him in copying out from rough drafts, and preparing manuscripts for the press. One day, while engaged in writing for him, he leaned over my shoulder, and said: 'Jessie, when I am no

longer with you, perhaps you will be able to write for your own support.'

'Where do you think of going to, papa?' I asked, looking up surprised.

'It may happen that I shall be removed from you in some way sooner than you think.' Of course the thought of death entered my head and alarmed me. I looked at papa's face; he did not seem paler than usual; his eye beamed brightly. Seeing my uneasiness, he laughed. 'Have I frightened you?' he asked.

'For a moment I felt alarmed,' I replied; 'but now I find you are only quizzing me.'

'Indeed, my dear, I am not quizzing you,' he replied gravely; 'I have an idea that we shall be separated before many months have passed away.'

Tears came into my eyes, blinding them, and I wrote on in a hurried nervous way, not daring to question my father any closer. I feared that he alluded to an arrest for debt, and I did not mention the circumstance to my mother, lest it should make her uneasy. From that day, however, I observed a sort of restlessness in my father's demeanour; he seemed unsettled, as if waiting for something. About this time, my parents were much embarrassed, thinking how they could provide for my brother Edward, who had entered upon his seventeenth year, and there was certainly great cause for anxiety on all sides. Edward himself was rather indolent and proud, though highly principled, and gifted with considerable talents; the idea of being placed in any low position would have preyed heavily on his spirit, and yet what better could he expect than to earn his bread as a counting-house clerk, or a merchant's apprentice? My father shared all his son's objections to the only ways of providing for him which seemed within our means. Things were beginning to look very black in our humble home. I lay awake very often at night, harassed with care, and it sometimes struck me that I heard footsteps approaching my closet-door, stopping there for about five minutes at a time, as if somebody were about to enter my room in the night, and then turned back without doing so. On three successive nights, I heard these footsteps thus mysteriously approach and pause at my door, and at last I mentioned the circumstance to my mother. She only laughed at what she called my dreams, and being convinced that I made no mistake, I determined to get up the next night when I heard the sounds, and discover if anybody, natural or supernatural, were really there.

Retiring to rest at my usual hour, I lay awake for a long time, watching and thinking, with a nervous feeling oppressing me, when the footsteps again approached my door; they paused, then retreated, then returned. Jumping out of bed, I groped for my gown, and had put it on, when the latch of the door was turned by a cautious hand; a light flashed round the room, and a figure clad in a dressing-gown entered, bearing in one hand a candlestick, in the other something that nearly made me scream, though I had presence of mind enough to control myself. The figure was that of my father. His face was a little flushed; his eyes had a glassy stare; the lips were compressed, as if with fixed determination. In his right hand he held an open razor. Like lightning, the thought flashed upon me that he was insane, and coming to murder me; I grew chill with terror—my blood seemed to freeze. He started back on seeing me standing by the bed-side, instead of being asleep, as he had no doubt expected to find me; and dropping his hand suddenly, the razor fell from it. With an instinctive movement I sprang forward, and seizing the deadly weapon, shut it up, as I asked him in a husky voice if he wanted anything.

'No, nothing,' he replied. 'But why are you not in bed at this extraordinary hour?'

'My head ached, and I could not sleep,' I replied trembling.

"Then I shall see that you sleep soundly enough!" he said, with a wild glitter of the eye. "I do not want to have spies to watch me night and day. Come out here, and die calmly!"

"Yes," said I, with a frightful effort at composure; "but let me first say a prayer in the parlour."

"Coward!" he exclaimed in a voice of thunder: "stay where you are; don't dare to elude me!"

"Only for a moment, dear papa," I said imploringly, as I rushed past him, and darted into the parlour—taking care to close the door after me. Fortunately, the parlour-door was wide open, and I had time to run into the hall before my father left the closet; I had also time and presence of mind to lock the parlour-door, as the key stood in it. Then I alarmed my mother and Edward. It was a frightful night of anguish to us all. My father's excitement did not continue violent; next day he was perfectly quiet, but plunged in melancholy. Mamma wished to persuade herself and others that he was only getting brain-fever, but she was deceived. The doctor whom we sent for to Farmley declared that his bodily health was good, and that, as far as he could judge, he was labouring under insanity. We were told that we could not keep him with safety at home, although the means employed by Dr Lampton seemed to have allayed the violence of the malady. We knew this ourselves; but where could we send him to? Our income was only sufficient to keep us from starvation, and the thought of sending my father to a pauper asylum was not for a moment to be dreamed of. The utmost distress and perplexity overwhelmed us. The Webbs, at this trying time, were indeed kind neighbours; they sent over one of their stout workmen, who understood something of the treatment of the insane, to watch my father for several nights during the first fortnight of his illness, promising us further assistance if necessary. Upon me the management of our concerns now fell, for mamma's strength gave way before the frightful affliction that had befallen us; she was obliged to remain in bed. All was misery and dreariness. Ten years seemed suddenly added to my own age. I am not sure that more than one white hair had not started into my head. Meanwhile, to add to our shame and perplexity, the doctor was continually asking if we had made arrangements for placing papa at a fitting asylum; and even Mr Horne worried us with the same question. Ashamed to confess our poverty, we experienced more pain from pride than from the numerous deprivations we were obliged to submit to. Our mode of living was necessarily most frugal. In order to provide little dainties for our mother, and proper strengthening nourishment for our father, we stinted ourselves to the most common fare, eating scarcely any meat, dispensing with tea or coffee, and rarely indulging in butter. All this I could have borne without a murmur, if our poverty could have remained concealed, but this was impossible. Seeing my mother sinking rapidly from torture of mind rather than bodily illness, I determined upon a plan that even to myself appeared wild and extravagant. I had for some years known that her youngest brother, Mortimer Daubeny, at the death of his two elder brothers, had inherited the property of her grandfather, and, without telling any one of my intentions, I wrote to that man a letter, which I hoped might move his compassion. This is a copy of what I said:

"DEAR SIR—I trust you will pardon the liberty I take in sending you this letter. Were it not that my family are plunged in a state of fearful distress, I would not attempt to do anything so presumptuous, considering that you may not be aware of my existence. My mother, your sister, is lying on a bed of illness; my father has lately become insane; my two brothers are growing up without prospect of provision for their future years; and we are all overwhelmed

with difficulties. For the sake of my mother, I implore your assistance at this trying time.—Your unhappy niece,

JESSIE KEPPELTON."

#### LOFTY TUMBLING.

THERE are few of us, male or female, who have not attempted feats of balancing in our early youth—walking on a wall of one brick thick, or along a line of posts and rails—to the terror of our parents and guardians. But with middle age, and indeed before it, has come a sense of insecurity. To stand upon a moving barrel was, even at school, a gift restricted to but few of our companions; the majority of us never attempted it but once, and then with the most unpleasant results. It became evident that nerve and eye were wanting to us for the higher branches of the art—the house-parapets, the poplar-trees, the bridge-balustrades—and we gave up the humiliating struggle with a sigh. As we grew up, the bar, not the bar of the gymnasium, the church, and not the steeple which it was once our greatest ambition to surmount, absorbed us with the common herd. A few embraced the maritime calling, as approximating, in its climbing requisitions, to our beloved pursuit, but by almost all of us the Art of Balancing, as a profession, was forsaken. Those who still clung to it could cling to anything—a straw, a cobweb, a mote in a sunbeam—and Nature herself had evidently marked them out as Acrobats, to be 'looked up to' for the rest of their lives by all the world, on the tight or slack ropes.

There is no doubt that rope-walking is a dangerous calling for any man. *Il gagne la vie en cherchant de la perte.* It is a far more dreadful trade than samphire-gathering, inasmuch as the middle of a rope is a far less pleasant place to dangle from than the end of it. The rope-walker, however, exhibits grace, agility, courage, and a command over limb and muscle that is really admirable. It is, of course, a less respectable pursuit than that of commerce, or even stock-jobbing, but it is less certain death than many poisonous trades. The life of a stoker on board a steamship on the coast of Africa, nay, even that of a railway engine-driver—taking into consideration the changes of temperature, and chances of accident over a long term of years—is scarcely less hazardous. That of a Wild-beast Tamer is perhaps more so. Moreover, with every exhibition, the nerve of the performer is steadied, his confidence increased, his skill perfected. I am far from denying the courage of a man who will run upon a two-inch rope over space through which he would fall as a falling star, and which I myself would not adventure though the hazard should make me Monarch of the Universe, but his position looks far worse than it really is. A slip with him is not necessarily a fall, for he could catch the rope by leg or hand like a monkey; and it is impossible for one who has always such a contingency in his mind to lose his nerve. If he falls, he is a dead man; and it is that contingency which the spectators are always contemplating, and which so greatly excites their awe and wonder.

There are at present alive (at least at the date of my writing this paper), and in London, two of the most wonderful gymnasts that the world has ever seen; either of whom exhibiting the least striking of his performances among a savage nation, would be hailed at once its monarch, if not its deity. M. Blondin, indeed, may well be called the Prince of the Power of the Air. He may know the laws of gravity (although I doubt it), but he certainly seems to set them at defiance. He exhibits feats upon a two-inch rope, narrowed by tension to one and a half inches, which it would puzzle the most agile of those school-fellows of whom I have spoken to perform upon the solid earth. He is 110 feet from Death beneath him, and 160 feet from safety on either hand, when he stands on the middle of the rope. If giddiness

or illness seized him there, no ladder could reach him, even if a man were found to ascend by it, to conduct his trembling feet to the ground. The guys and weights (of eighty pounds), which at intervals of twenty-five feet steady his fearful way, would aid him nothing then. His thirty-feet perfectly-balanced pole—his magic-wand of safety, and the one ally that makes possible his wondrous deeds—would be only an incumbrance to him in case of his having to snatch a flying grip. The mastery of such a situation as his—apart from the hideous accessories of the sack and bandage, of the stove and the omelette, of the chains and the baskets on his feet—has been acquired by no mean qualities, call him idiot, buffoon, tempter of Providence, or what you will. M. Blondin's father, as we are told, was a soldier of the First Empire, and served at Austerlitz, and in the dreadful Russian campaign. We may be sure his son has no less need of courage and endurance than had he. Even these gifts would be useless to him in his present calling without flexibility, accuracy of vision, strength, agility, delicacy of touch, and a score of other natural gifts. At four and a half, he exhibited at the Gymnase at Lyon as the Little Wonder; at seven-and-thirty, he crossed 1200 feet of two-inch rope above Niagara Falls upon a pair of stilts four feet high. He has thus been upwards of thirty years practising with impunity a profession which some consider to be so dangerous that the law ought to interfere, and put it down. It is useless, they also argue, and I believe go so far as to affirm that its effect is immoral. Good! When I see the metropolitan police-force engaged not in 'keeping the course' as at present, but in clearing Epsom Downs of the hundreds of thousands who congregate there to encourage 'the means for improving the breed of horses' (as the hypocrites have it), then, I say, shake the rope, and down with the Tumbler; but, in the meantime, let us be consistent, and, in our zeal for humanity, not forget that M. Blondin is also a man, who wishes to earn his living.\* The above considerations formed the principal topic of conversation of the thousands who thronged to see his first performance at the Crystal Palace, and poured into all railway-carriages quite independently of the nature of their tickets.

'It's disgraceful that it should be allowed!' exclaimed one benevolent old gentleman, who was going down to the palace, he said, expressly *not* to see Blondin, and whom I afterwards detected, with my race-glass, up in the ten-and-sixpenny gallery, where 'a few places affording a hitherto unprecedented opportunity for closely watching the feats of M. Blondin' were reserved. Singularly enough, this respectable hypocrite and myself returned in the same carriage, when he confided to me, with respect to the feats he had been witnessing, that with a little practice he should not despair of performing them himself!

The self-reliance of this rope-walker is indeed so excessive, that it begets confidence in the spectators. For a few steps down the incline of the rope, he treads with caution, but once on the level, his sinewy feet devour the way with ease and rapidity, lapping over the narrow path like claws. When he runs, in fact, he seems to be safest—perhaps from the notion which the movement suggests, of his getting off and away. When he marches very slowly to the music of the band beneath him, like a drum-major, the effect is really striking; the fantastic apparel—that of an Indian chief—which he wears, and the pompous movement, being divested of their absurdity by our overwhelming sense of the peril. The passage once effected in safety, the vast audience draws one long breath, and the hum of conversation, which entirely ceases during the performance, is resumed. All are

gratified to think that the man is yet alive, and feel—a rare sensation with any audience—that they have had quite enough for their money. Yet the man recrosses *backwards*, stopping on his way to kneel, to stand on his head in the centre of the magic-pole, to lie down upon that scanty couch, and even to throw summersaults! Strangely enough, the sense of relief when this is over is neither so universal nor so intense as after the less dangerous performance. Use had already begun its petrifying work. Nevertheless, a great thrill of horror ran through the galleries, when this seeming madman proceeded to bandage his eyes, to put a sack over his head, reaching below his knees, and then to advance, as it were in the dark, upon that gossamer-thread. Coming down the incline, his nerves seem to give way, his knees to knock together, and he staggers and drops one of his legs below the rope. This was all affected, and belongs to his 'sensation' feats, but it robbed him of several of his audience. There was no shrieking, but every one shrank within himself, and many persons, both male and female, got up and went out into the open galleries for fresh air. He repeated this pleasant experiment more than once; he sat down in the middle of the rope, and with horrid tugs, divested himself of the sack and bandage, and threw them down. He did many other much more wonderful things, which have been described in the newspapers; things which recall that horrible story of the Grand Duke Michael of Russia, who is said to have compelled a man and horse to leap again, and again, and again, over a pile of bayonets, until they *were* impaled; things which, one thinks, *must* in the end be fatal. A man who can play practical jests on a possible violent death, must indeed feel secure of his position. I am at ease! Let him take his stove and cook his omelette; it will doubtless be very good. Let him take his friend and carry him pickaback—and there are so many desirous of that honour, that M. Blondin has had to advertise that his 'arrangements' in that respect are concluded—I shall feel no apprehension, although I should decline to be that friend myself. Let him cross in stilts—although that *does* seem incredible—and I believe he will even accomplish that in safety. Nay, I believe, if you only 'gave him rope enough,' he would march with his long red pole across the Atlantic Ocean.

The French, to whose powers of invention (so long as you do not insist upon utility) there is no limit, have invented for the world the Trapeze: a means of locomotion not so generally convenient as steam-vessels and railways, but so far as it goes, perfection. Imagine 'the swing' of your childhood suspended from a lofty ceiling by two very long ropes, and that instead of sitting on the bar, you grasp it with your hands, and hang from it at arms' length; the Trapeze is merely a series of these swings. The Art consists, when all these are set in motion, in passing from one to the other, and so flying by the hands through a vast space. The Trapeze has already many homes, but let us select the Alhambra as our scene—formerly that *Panopticon*, which classical scholars cynically translated the *All my Eye*—and 'the wondrous Leotard,' who wings his nightly way there, as our performer. Late in the evening, a few supper-parties in the body of the hall have to break up, in order that the narrow platform—formed of a number of spring-boards laid upon what look most painfully like coffin-trestles—may be laid across it, extending, too, far back across the stage. Upon this, with its three layers of carpet, the performer has to come down head over heels whenever he wishes to rest himself, and is tired of swinging. The Trapezes are steadied by guy-lines, to moderate their swing; but still the platform is often at a vast distance, lateral as well as perpendicular, from the performer, and seems to be but a very narrow path to calculate upon arriving at in an inverted attitude; while to leap anywhere else would

\* Since the above was in type, M. Blondin has thought proper to imperil his child's life as well as his own: a proceeding which the government has very properly forbidden for the future.

be fatal. The unhappy professor of the Trapeze who immediately preceded M. Leotard at the Alhambra, was killed in that very hall; and the circumstance no doubt contributes to its present occupant's great popularity. The exhibition is at least as terrible as that of M. Blondin; and indeed nought but the perfect self-possession and coolness of both these men—combined with their evident physical gifts—enables one to gaze upon them at all. Nothing can exceed the grace and elegance of Leotard's motions. No ballet-dancing can compare with it for beauty. When he has climbed the little ladder that leads from the spring-board to the gallery, and standing upon that elevation, has the longest Trapeze handed up to him—the bar being removed from it, and a couple of stirrups for the hand set in its place—he presents a model for a sculptor. The mighty chest, the muscular arms and wrists, remind one in the power of the gorilla, in their beauty, of the Apollo Belvidere. Now he draws a long breath, grasps the stirrups firmly, and projects himself with a great impetus into space; he swings right across the vast arena, and raising himself by his wrists, returns to the gallery again, which he attains by a summersault. His flight is as swift and graceful as the exit and return of a swallow to her nest in the house-roof. A second Trapeze is now slowly put in motion in front of him; he swoops down as before to meet it, and loosing his hold at the moment he has calculated upon, flies through the intervening space—ten feet, or twelve, or twenty, just as it happens—and lo! he is swinging by the second! A third Trapeze is then added, and the man flies across the whole arena with the stage added, his hands shifting so rapidly from bar to bar that the change is almost imperceptible. But his hands, agile as they are, are equalled by his other extremities; he as often projects himself from his legs, arrives in perfect safety by that strange method, and before you have done wondering, comes down head over heels, with a great whack on the spring-board, amid tumultuous applause. Sometimes he performs a summersault in the air between the Trapezes, sometimes he turns round perpendicularly, as though to see how his deserted bar was going on in his absence, but the unvarying conclusion of every feat is to come down on the spring-board. Surely never before were human muscles so schooled, never has the story of Peter Wilkins received such wonderful confirmation. If he were all feathers and wire-work, it would be impossible for this man to throw himself about with more apparent recklessness, but at the same time, as I believe, with a greater safety. The impression derived from beholding the feats of these two great gymnasts is this: that Blondin *could* not fall; and that if Leotard did fall, he would yet somehow save himself.

#### SHIPS' NAMES AND SHIPS' SIGNALS.

EVERY ship has a name; and, doubtless, names have been given to ships from very early times, although not many of the older ones have been handed down to us.

The liberty, indeed, is boundless. If a man have 'a right to do what he will with his own,' he claims a right to give a name to his own property; and there is not, so far as we are aware, any record of tyranny interfering with the free exercise of this privilege. Mighty powers, of course, give names to ships belonging to the state. There was the world-renowned *Argo*, connected with the Argonautic expedition. There was the famous *Bucintaur*, in which the Doge of Venice, during so many centuries, sailed forth on his hymeneal voyage to marry the fair Adriatic. There was the *Great Harry*, which astonished England as the chief war-ship of Henry VIII.;

the *Sovereign of the Seas*, under Charles I.; and the *Royal Prince*, under James I—all, in their way, 'first-rates.' Historians have been able to hand down to us the names of the ships composing the Spanish Armada; and the list is curious, as shewing to how large an extent religious feeling, or at least church influence, was brought to bear upon that famous fleet. The saints reigned in profusion. There were *St James*, *St John*, *St Stephen*, *St Christopher*, *St Peter*, *St Philip*, *St Anthony*, *St Francis*, *St Bartholomew*, *St Barnaby*, *St Gabriel*, *St Andrew*, *St Jerome*, *St Lawrence*; while among female saints there were *St Anne*, *St Mary*, *St Katharine*, and *St Martha*; and besides these there were the religious designations *Conception*, *Annunciation*, *Assumption*, *Holy Cross*, *Holy Trinity*, and *Holy Ghost*.

In England, and in our own day, the royal navy is vast; but it is as nothing compared with the merchant navy. The vessels belonging nominally to Queen Victoria, but really to the nation—from the mighty *Warrior* and *Duke of Wellington* down to the smallest gun-boat and sloop—receive names which are not particularly striking for their oddity or comicality; but in the thirty or forty thousand ships which, in some part of the world or other, hoist the British flag, and engage in trade, the names embrace all the wide range 'from grave to gay, from lively to severe.'

As we may naturally expect, the famous sea-captains and admirals, who have brought renown to the British navy, are much patronised by the sponsors of ships. The *Nelsons*, *Collingwoods*, *Hovens*, *St Vincents*, *Rodneys*, *Exmouths*—all are there. Nor is the sister-service at all neglected; wherever a British general has gained distinction, there may we rely on sundry ships being named after him—not merely in the fighting-navy, but in the peaceful trading-navy. *Marlborough*, *Wellington*, *Hill*, *Anglesea*, *Moore*; and in more recent days, *Havelock*, *Neill*, *Nicholson*, *Campbell*, *Cathcart*, *Raglan*, *Outram*—room has been found for all. The name of *Havelock* has been an especial favourite within the last few years.

The most favourite names for ships are those of sweethearts and wives, or of women at least who may be sweethearts and wives. Their number is something prodigious. Look at the varieties under the letter A only. The *Amelias* are forty strong, the *Alices*, sixty-two; while the varieties of *Ann*, *Anne*, *Anna*, and *Annie* rise to the formidable number of 550. The most prodigious name, perhaps, is *Mary*, with its allied forms *Maria*, *Marian*, *Marianna*, *Marianne*, *Marion*, *Marie*, *Marietta*; these, with duplicate names beginning with *Mary*, figure in the mercantile navy to the amount of 1100! The loyalty, too, of the ship-namers is something to admire; besides a goodly list of kings and emperors, princes and princesses, we have seventy-six *Queens* and twenty-two *Queen Victorias*, besides a sprinkling of *Queen Adelaises*, *Queen Annes*, *Queen Carolines*, and *Queen Charlottes*. There are other queens, too, whose regality is of a somewhat different kind—*Queen Bee* and *Queen Mah*, *Queen Esther* and the *Queen of Sheba*, the *Queen of Beauty* and the *Queen of Trumps*, the *Queen of Clippers* and the *Queen of Freedom*; as well as *Queens* of the *East*, *West*, *North*, and *South*; and *Queens* of the *Sea*, *the Ocean*, *the Lakes*, *the Isles*, *the Forest*, and *the Chase*.

All the jewels, including the *Koh-i-noor*, have representatives among our trading-ships, such as the *Diamond*, *Sapphire*, *Ruby*, and so forth; and all the flowers—such as *Daisy*, *Forget-me-not*, and *Mignonette*—that are familiarly known by name. As to astronomy, we have all the planets, from *Mercury* to widely distant *Neptune*; more than half of the asteroids,

such as *Ceres* and *Pallas*; and all the twelve signs of the zodiac, besides the word *Zodiac* itself. Of course, everything that relates to the watery element on which the ship is borne is seized upon.

Books, too, and heroes, and heroines of story, are not neglected: thus, the shade of Sir Walter Scott might feel a little proud to know how many ships are named *Peveril*, *Rob Roy*, *Redgauntlet*, *Ivanhoe*, *Lady of the Lake*, *Pirate*, *Roderick Dhu*, and *Helei Macgregor*. Ships have not forgotten to honour *Mary Russell Mitford* and *Dinah Mulock*, *Florence Nightingale* (fifteen of these), *Caroline Chisholm*, and *Grace Darling*; while *Jenny Lind* and *Taglioni* have come in for no small share of notice. All the pretty girls, too, who have ever been made the heroines of song, are here. Of these, Miss Annie Laurie seems to be the prime favourite, for she is seven times repeated.

Those ship-owners or ship-captains must have been rather at a loss for titles who hit upon such names as *Thrasher*, *Spank Away*, *Sure Shot*, *Safe and Satisfactory*, *Ready Rhino*, *Rogue in Grain*, *Come On*, *Never Despair*, and *Mrs Caudle*.

The appellation of a ship, or at least its personal identity, is a matter of consequence in a busy commercial country like ours, where ships are reckoned by tens of thousands. When two ships meet on the broad ocean, it is not only pleasant to have a chat—such chat as they indulge in when said to be 'spoken with'—but it is really important that they should do so; for it is by such means that merchants, ship-owners, ship-insurers, and the friends of those on board, obtain a large part of their information concerning the absent vessels. To make this information valid, each ship must obtain the name of the other, and this name must be made known by the exhibition of flags or some other symbols. Let us suppose that the *Saucy Jack* of Bristol meets the *Lively Nancy* of Sunderland; flags, displayed in a certain way, convey the symbols for these names; but suppose there to be two *Lively Nancies* registered at the port of Sunderland—a thing not by any means improbable—and it will at once be seen that the information is not sufficiently definite without something else being brought to its aid. It happens to be a fact, that there are four vessels registered at the port of Sunderland each bearing the name of the *Queen*; that there are an equal number at Faversham with the name of *Good Intent*; that there are five at Colchester called *Industry*; that there are eleven *Johns* at Liverpool; and that sixteen ships in the port of London answer to the name of *Mary*.

Until 1855, merchant-ships had *names* but no official *numbers* belonging to them; while the means for signalling the names, and the other points of information obtained by ships which 'speak to' each other, were diverse in kind and cumbersome in use. In that year, an act of parliament came into force, more extensive in its scope and complete in its details than any other ever passed relating to British merchant-ships; in fact, it became the statute concerning trading-vessels, superseding nearly all others. One of its provisions gave large powers to the Board of Trade; and this Board speedily had its attention brought to the necessity for making some change in the names and signals for ships. The vessels at that time registered at all the ports in all the dominions of Queen Victoria, all over the world, amounted to the stupendous number of 35,000; and as there are, on an average, about 1500 new vessels added every year, it became evident that there would soon be a need for providing 50,000 symbols for ships, each one different from all the others. The statute above adverted to required, among other things, that every British registered ship should have an official number; that this number should be marked on the main beam, and written on the certificate of registry; that this number should not be changed so long as the vessel remained afloat; and that it should afford a means

for identifying the vessel irrespective of the name. But how to enable a few flags to signal 50,000 different names, besides 20,000 other words, phrases, and sentences, some or other of which ships are in the habit of exchanging with each other when they meet at sea? No code of signals existing would grasp these high numbers, and yet be simple and practicable. To solve the difficulty, the Board of Trade appointed a committee to investigate the whole affair. The members of the committee were admirably chosen; some being nominated by the Board of Trade, some by the Board of Admiralty, some by the Trinity House, some by Lloyd's, some by the General Ship-owners' Society, and some by the Liverpool Ship-owners' Society—in such a way as to meet the views of all parties. The committee examined all the codes of naval signals they could get hold of—Lynn's, Squire's, Phillips's, Röhde's, Raper's, Walker's, Watson's, Rogers's, Reynold's, Marryatt's, &c., as well as three which had at different times been adopted by the Admiralty. The one most in use in England was Marryatt's; while Reynold's prevailed in France; and Rogers's in the United States. Each had good qualities; but all were deficient in the power of application to a very high series of numbers. The committee, therefore, acting upon an eclectic principle similar to that by which a famous Greek painter is said to have produced a picture of a very beautiful woman, sought to combine the merits of several models, and keep clear of their defects. This was done, and there resulted a code of signals which may now be called the national code for the whole British empire, although not absolutely compulsory.

Finding that Marryatt's flags were familiarly known to the captains and mates of merchant-ships, the committee made as little change as possible in them, but adapted them to a wholly new signal-book. It may perhaps not be known to every reader, that when one ship signals another, she does so by hoisting flags to such a height as to be conveniently visible: the number, shape, position, colours, and devices of the flags being varied according to the word or message to be signalled. Now, the committee determined that there ought not to be more than four flags used at one hoist, or for one signal, in order that the signalling should not be too difficult and complex. They then calculated how many flags they would want to produce all the permutations of twos, threes, and fours; and they found that eighteen would be about the number. They then said: 'Let one flag be called A, another B, another C, and so on, until eighteen have been provided, and then let us place these letters together in twos, threes, or fours, to represent the several symbols.' But here they met with an embarrassment. They found that in ringing the 70,000 changes, they encountered nearly all the unpleasantly short words in the English language—words which people would neither like to speak nor to read. And so they resolved to leave out the vowels altogether. They selected the first eighteen consonants, from B to W. It is true that this produces very unpronounceable combinations—such as QSB, DMBT, LGWJ, and so on; but this is a matter of little consequence: if the combination cannot be glibly spoken or easily read as a word, the letters that compose it can be readily identified and named; and the system has been found intelligible in theory and easy in practice. Every ship, registered in any part of the British dominions, has, besides an official number, an official symbol, different from that of every other ship. This symbol is expressed in capital Roman letters, of which there are never more than four employed at once. Whether, therefore, any particular ship be designated by its number or its symbol, it is equally indicated, and equally identified from all others. If numbers be used, No. 1 will always be the *Blessing*, of Goole, so long as that vessel

remains on the register; and even when her career is run out, and she becomes broken up, there will not be any attempt made for many years to give that number to any other vessel. If that particular ship be known by her symbol, it is HBCD, which symbol will continue to belong to that ship only.

The reader must not suppose that there is a superfluity of the means of identification here; the numbers are most convenient for keeping a written and printed register, while the symbols are the most available for signalling by means of flags. In the symbol, no letter is repeated; that is, all the letters in any one symbol are different; this lessens the chance of confusion and complexity in signalling by means of flags. The symbols are not given without some principle of selection; there is a system followed, by which the persons concerned can tell at a glance what *class* of meaning is intended, and can thence judge what sort of information to look out for. Thus, a symbol of one letter only is rarely used, for such signals as 'Yes,' 'No,' and a few others. A symbol of two letters, such as BD, KL, &c., denotes that the signal conveyed is something urgent and important, and must be attended to at once. A symbol of three letters, such as CKM, DFJ, &c., is always used for signalling the general topics which arise between two ships when they 'speak' with each other at sea, or between a ship and a signal-station on shore. A symbol of four letters, such as BDGM or HCDP, is used either for geographical words and phrases, or for the names of ships. The geographical symbols in four letters all begin with letter B. The symbols for the names of queen's ships all begin with letter G; and those for merchant-ships with some letter later in the alphabet than G, the very first being HBCD. It will thus be seen that, besides the particular meaning of each symbol, there are certain groups of symbols having a common character or general meaning, very useful to the mariner who wished to know what *kind* of news to look out for.

Such being the numbers and symbols, we have to see how these are rendered available. There have been published, under the auspices of the Board of Trade, a list of about 40,000 names of ships; and another list of about 20,000 words, phrases, and sentences useful to seafaring-men, and connected with the wellbeing of a ship and its crew. To every entry in the first list there is a number and a symbol, and to every entry in the second list a symbol only. There are, in fact, two lists of the names of ships—one alphabetical, and the other numerical. If the name of a ship be known, reference to the first of these two lists will give us the ship's number and symbol; if the number be known, reference to the second list will give us the ship's name; and as the symbol bears an easily understood relation to the name, any one of the three being known, the other two may easily be found. This relates to the mercantile navy list. The other book, the Code of Signals, contains about 20,000 messages, of the kind above adverted to, arranged in such a way that the mariner can readily find any one he wants, and can readily put an interpretation on any one signalled to him from another ship. If he wants to signal the message or information, 'Bound to New York,' he looks in his book, and finds the symbol that will denote this; if he sees a signal flying from another ship, he reads it by the aid of his book, and finds it to mean (we will suppose), 'Bound to Liverpool,' and thus the two ships 'speak' as they pass.

Lastly, we have to notice the signal-flags. These, as before stated, are eighteen in number, with another for subsidiary purposes. They are made up and sold in sets. Not more than four of these eighteen are used at once, or for one signal or message; but all are necessary, for it is never known beforehand which will be needed. The ensign of a ship is to be shewn at the peak, when the signal-flags are about to be used. The eighteen flags represent the eighteen

consonants mentioned in a former paragraph; and when four of these are hoisted, in a vertical line under and over each other, they denote the four letters which together form the symbol for a particular ship; or when two, three, or four are hoisted, they denote the words or phrases already adverted to. Some of the flags are quadrangular, measuring about eight feet by six; some are pendants, fifteen feet by five, and pointed at one end. There are mostly only two colours on each flag, but sometimes three. The devices are spots, stripes, bands, crosses, borders, &c. If a flag of a particular shape is hoisted uppermost, that denotes the general *class* to which the signal or message belongs; while the colours and devices afford means for identifying the exact details of the message. The flags for the royal navy are slightly different, but are brought into harmony with the same general system. There is a subsidiary mode of denoting latitudes and longitudes, to minutes of a degree, by means of three flags and a ball. In order to catch the eye at a distance, the uppermost signal-flag on a royal ship differs in a marked way from that of a merchant-ship, in shape. All royal ships, and all ships carrying troops, emigrants, or government stores, are obliged to be provided with signal-flags after this new code; and all British merchant-ships are likely to be placed at a disadvantage unless they do so, for all the authoritative bodies have been lucky enough to concur in the adoption of it; moreover, they are offering every possible facility for foreign nations to do likewise. The Board of Trade will give a four-letter symbol to every foreign vessel, on certain conditions, and will take care that that symbol shall not be appropriated by any other ship. It is also proposed, for international purposes, that the same combination of flags, represented by the same symbol in a book, shall always have the same *meaning* in every language, whatever the *word* may be in which that meaning is conveyed; each country being left to make its own vocabulary, to be used with the English code-book and signal-flags. If this be acted upon, the benefit to mariners of all countries will be immense. Coasting-vessels, and other small craft that do not want to give or receive many signals, may dispense with the eighteen regulation-flags, and make use simply of two square pieces of cloth, two long slips of cloth, and two balls or bundles; the code shews how these may be used to convey the requisite signals.

#### THE LIVING DEAD.

W<sup>e</sup> are surrounded by the living dead,  
Men whose whole lives seem purposeless and vain.  
They're bubbles in the air, husks 'mid the grain,  
Mere walking flesh-piles without heart or head.  
They're dead as those on whose old graves we tread,  
Long years companioned with the flesh-fat worm.  
To shew they're men, they've nothing but the form.  
They are not worth their daily meat and bread.  
The marvels of creation move them not;  
As well preach God unto a fleshless skull.  
Surrounded by the grand and beautiful,  
They're cold as icy stone of mossy grot.  
Their life's a dream, a festering in the sun.  
Snatched from this working-earth, who'd miss them?  
None!

J. E.

CHAMBERS'S MISCELLANY OF USEFUL AND ENTERTAINING TRACTS being about to be issued *only in volumes*, those who may wish to complete their sets of the work should do so as soon as possible.

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